
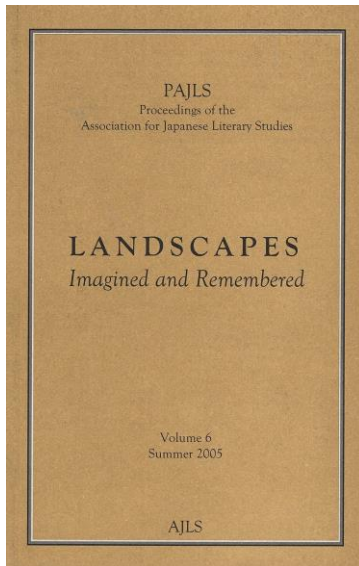


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Christine L. Marran 

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**The Scape of Empire in Numa Shōzō's Science Fiction Novel
Kachikujin Yapū (1957-1959)**

Christine L. Marran
University of Minnesota

This essay considers the scape of empire as it is expressed in Numa Shōzō's sophisticated science fiction novel *Kachikujin Yapū* (Beast Yapū, 1957-1959). This lengthy novel features a Japanese man, Rin'ichirō, who is forced to be the sexualized slave of white matriarchal leaders of the intergalactic Empire of a Hundred Suns (EHS). *Kachikujin Yapū* is considered an S/M novel not only for its portrayal of sadistic pleasures, but also because it was serialized in the premiere S/M journal *Kitan kurabu* (Bizarre Stories Club), to which Numa was a frequent contributor of original and translated essays about masochism and sadism. This novel goes far beyond erotic entertainment in its engagement with questions of empire and power.

When *Kachikujin Yapū* was serialized, various literary critics, including the renowned author Mishima Yukio, praised it for its thrilling and insightful depiction of S/M psychology. Like other select postwar literature and film involving sexualized submissive men, *Kachikujin Yapū* is deeply political; however, unlike these texts, *Kachikujin Yapū* does not produce a direct critique of a nationalist masculinity or a veiled celebration of male resistance to privilege and totalitarian patriarchy through its submissive male protagonist.¹ Rather, it is a book about the sadistic pleasures of empire-building told through a mythic history of the conquest of the Japanese race by a white matriarchal society, a curious and bold rewriting of Japan's origin myths in intergalactic space. This essay describes how *Kachikujin Yapū* critiques empire as an inherently perverse system by focusing on how science fiction and sadism are employed to expose the transparent relationship between the construction of empire, science, and language.

The relationship of language to empire is at the heart of this futuristic novel, which portrays the domination of the "yellow race" by a white matriarchal empire from the perspective of the distant future. Much of the story is told through the eyes of Rin'ichirō, an exchange student in Germany in 1980, and Clara, his German (and Caucasian) fiancée. The two are taken

¹ Some examples of the ways in which male masochism is used to critique imperial and patriarchal power are: Ōshima Nagisa's *Ai no koriida* (In the Realm of the Senses, 1976); Tanaka Noboru's *Jitsuroku Abe Sada* (The True Story of Abe Sada, 1975); Satō Makoto's *Abe Sada no inu* (Abe Sada's Dogs, 1972); and Oda Sakunosuke's *Sesō* (The State of the Times, 1946). For a discussion of masochism and empire, see Christine L. Marran, *She Had It Coming: The Poison Woman in Japanese Modernity*, forthcoming from University of Minnesota Press.

into space after a spaceship from EHS, operated by the tall and curvaceous time-traveler Pauline, crash lands where Rin'ichirō and Clara are horseback riding. In an early scene, the reader learns that Rin'ichirō is not such a good horseback rider because of his aversion to asserting authority over the horse: this is a hint that he is already sympathetic to the beast and therefore a naturally-born submissive figure whose imminent enslavement by EHS is only natural. Rin'ichirō is bit by Pauline's man-faced dog – one of the many slaves called Yapū in EHS – who has been physically transformed to serve a specific role for his mistress Pauline. Pauline, who will not deign to speak to Rin'ichirō because she considers him to be a *yapū*, convinces Clara that they must travel together to EHS to get an antidote for Rin'ichirō's wound. Pauline's real motivation, however, is to teach Clara the ways of EHS because Pauline is deeply disturbed when she sees Clara treat Rin'ichirō as if he were *human*.

One essential plot line in this novel is the transformation of Clara from loving fiancée to domineering mistress. Surely Numa must have had Mori Ōgai's short story "Maihime" (Dancing Girl, 1890) in mind when he created an international romance between Clara and Rin'ichirō. Ōgai's semi-autobiographical tale tells the story of the student Toyotarō's decision to abandon his German lover Elise for a position of power within the Japanese government. In this nationalist paradigm, masculinity, patriotism, and global fluency (linguistic and otherwise) are expressed through the rejection of the western European Other, who is depicted as female, low-class, silent, and submissive. *Kachikujin Yapū* reverses this tale of a patriot who returns home at the bidding of his colleagues, leaving dancer Elise to fend for herself. While Mori Ōgai was fluent in German and had an unproblematic relationship with foreign language, Rin'ichirō in *Kachikujin Yapū* can only understand the language of the interplanetary travelers through his fiancée Clara. In this story of the decline of Japanese male power on a galactic scale, the white woman literally and figuratively determines the position of the yellow race and, in the world of her Amazonian sisters, Rin'ichirō is nothing more than a beast forced to be naked at all times as a reminder of his position. He has no name other than *yapū*, which is a word that, according to Numa's extensive and inventive etymology in the novel, is derived from the term "Japan." The etymology provided for the *yapū* homeland is Nihon → Nippon → Japan → Jaban. Numa symbolically combines "Japan" with *yaban*, meaning "barbaric," to create a word which, in the language of the novel's EHS, describes the yellow race as barbaric and naturally to be treated as subservient. In the language of EHS, Rin'ichirō is one of many "simian sapiens" who are physically altered, sometimes to an extreme degree, to serve the needs of their mistresses as chairs, couches, scooters, toilets, spoons, masturbating machines, musicians, and even tiny battling warriors.

The history of the transformation of the yellow race into a slave class for EHS's white royalty is recalled in the latter part of the novel by its reminiscing leaders. The empire's history tells of a devastating global nuclear war that was perpetrated in the late twentieth century by the white race (Britain and the U.S. are named, and it is noted that Japan went along with these two global powers.) Nuclear weapons wreaked so much havoc on the environment that the white race, lead by "General Mac," escaped into space. On earth, the Japanese people were so devastated by the nuclear blast that they could produce nothing but substandard progeny, their brains and eyes having turned gelatinous and cloudy. When the white race eventually returned to reclaim people on earth for a new slave class, the Japanese appeared to them to be stupid apes. The whites also found that the black race left on earth had enslaved the yellow race as *yapū* to serve as laborers; the blacks also referred to the Japanese as apes and monkeys, perpetuating the white perspective of the so-called yellow people as nonhuman. According to the mythical history of EHS, the white race enslaved both the black and yellow people – the blacks performed the more cerebral labor of the galactic empire and the *yapū* were used as pleasure-producing devices, furniture, plumbing, and the like. In the imperial landscape of EHS, woman reigns over man; white reigns over black, and black reigns over yellow. The pursuit of power within this matriarchal empire is twofold. The empire seeks control over all of the planets and land in the solar system and seeks the total pursuit of pleasure through the debasement and enslavement of men who are altered to serve its needs.

According to this critical satire of empire, scientific progress is a measure of the extent to which a people is civilized. The familiar nineteenth-century imperial discourse of progress (internalized by Japan during the Meiji era), which argues that advanced technologies implied a state of lesser barbarism, is demystified in this science fiction novel through the exaggerated portrayal of science as a tool for sadistic power. The EHS matriarchy, which uses technology to transform human bodies to serve their pursuit of power and pleasure, reflects the values of evolution and eugenics. It is rationalized that human beings are to function in the system rather than to exist as values in themselves; this means considering some humans to be inhuman. All activity, scientific and pleasurable, is rationalized by scientific discourse, which makes it more specifically a critique of the ways in which science was used to perpetuate sadistic cruelty in World War II: German eugenics, Japanese vivisection, and the invention of the American atomic bomb.

Kachikujin Yapū extends its critique of empire specifically with regard to the Japanese imperial myth, which was a contentious subject in Japan in the 1950s, when the work was written.² Through detailed references to the *Kojiki*

² In 1950, the "Heroic Age Symposium" was held under the auspices of the history sectional meeting of the Minshū-shugi Kagakusha Kyōkai. Debate over the Heroic Age gradually

(Record of Ancient Matters, 712), *Nihon shoki* (Chronicle of Japan, 720), and the academic essays of *kokugaku* scholar Motoori Norinaga, Numa rewrites Japan's origin myths in a new space (literally, space) to expose the transparent relationship between empire-building and language. Lengthy etymological descriptions of the EHS vocabulary for objects and the founding myths of the empire parody the style of Motoori's *Kojiki-den* (Treatise on the Kojiki, 1764-1798). For example, a philological explication of the term *oshink* – the name for the creature who absorbs through his mouth the urine of the mistresses of EHS – extends for pages and quotes various seemingly real sources in delineating the history of the word, its current meaning, and its current usages. As with Motoori's *Kojiki-den*, historical fact is created from archaic word. In its etymological trackings, *Kachikujin Yapū* parodically refers to *kyū-kachikugo* (classical beast language, an EHS term for the language of those from Jaban), and quotes imaginary reference books that are part of the etymological universe of the novel. One such reference book is *Kachiku-ron* (On the Beasts) by a research specialist and academician named “Rosenberg.”

The predominant images of Japan's imperial, colonialist past are absorbed by the new white empire's history. “Jaban” is the base of a lab that creates *yapūs* – a “yapūnarium” – which sits atop Mount Fuji decorated with a *hinomaru* flag. This lab is run by a white man (whose nose has been transformed into a *tengu*-like phallus) who is aided by a hermaphroditic person wearing a noh mask and waving a *hinomaru* flag. As Clara is told by citizens of EHS, *hinomaru* is a “cute” nickname given the flag by the *yapū* of the past. The *yapū* found the name endearing and they continue to use the term. Thus, the history of the colonized Jaban works its way into the language of the colonizers but the “Japanese” language itself is not associated with history or power. The unproblematic relationship of language to national history in *kokugaku* studies, which attempts to “recover and regenerate” origins to produce a national consciousness, is mimicked explicitly when the narrative of the history of EHS contains a footnote that addresses Motoori's interpretation of a particular term in the *Kojiki* (*muchi*) only to cite Motoori's discussion as a misinterpretation. In this satirical, darkly comic novel, Numa's complex etymologies suggest that the spell of empire, especially in the Japanese case, is deeply grounded in the myth of an original and unique language.

So, much like Motoori, who attempted to reconstruct through painstaking detail an ethnic and nationalist history for early modern Japan, Numa creates a complicated ancient history for EHS out of the fabric of Japan's imperial myths. Numa reenacts the process of inventing a homogeneous national language and ethos through the act of colonization for which one culture's language is translated quite easily to become the founding myths of an imperial culture. Numa depicts an emotional welling of

intensified, reaching its peak in 1951-52 at the general meeting of the Rekishigaku Kenkyūkai (Research Association for Historical Study).

nationalist desire in *yapū* Rin'ichirō when he overhears the EHS founding stories, which are interpretations of scenes from the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* that contradict interpretations Rin'ichirō learned in school. Rin'ichirō finds that his country's history has been rewritten in such a compelling fashion that he must consider the notion that the historiographic narrative of imperial lineage so familiar to him may have been invented. In this way, Numa illustrates the power that empire has to write or rewrite others' histories in its own image as well as the power of cultural myth to motivate its citizens to feel a deep sense of attachment to their histories.

The title of Numa's book is reminiscent of the term "yahoo" from Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*; *yahoo* refers to the savage, filthy creatures who possess unpleasant habits but resemble human beings. Just as Swift's *yahoo* appear barbaric and unclean to Lemuel Gulliver, Numa's *yapū* appear barbaric and unclean to EHS women in *Kachikujin Yapū*, until the former are transformed into useful instruments of pleasure and entertainment. *Gulliver's Travels*, then, likely inspired this critique of empire, although the novel more explicitly engages with contemporaneous history. Swift's satire illustrates that he fully recognized the limits of English economic power and morality, and one of his primary contributions was to turn on its head the facile dichotomy in which Europe embodied enlightenment, progress, technological advancement, and ethics, and Asia embodied that which was barbaric and crude in a technological and ethical sense. Robert Markley argues, "In their combination of fantasy and realism, Gulliver's encounters with the Japanese register profound anxieties about the limitations of English economic power, national identity, and morality in a world that until 1800 was dominated economically by the empires of South Asia and the Far East."³ Swift's decision to send Gulliver to Japan represents an inversion of Eurocentric discourses of colonialism, imperialism, and barbarism. Japan is used to critique the English empire of the eighteenth century and its tendency toward orientalism.

If Swift's novel inverts Eurocentric discourses of colonialism, imperialism, and barbarism, then Numa's novel inverts Swift's to recast in satirical form the European empire from a libidinal angle involving pleasure and power. Unlike Swift's Japanese, the Japanese (men) in this novel are considered beasts by the white race. The fantasy of the Japanese male as the embodiment of barbarism is the fantasy of a white matriarchy that is a sophisticated combination of both Eastern and Western empires. Transgression is impossible in this highly ordered, complex system in which pleasure is freely available to those in power. In fact, those in power are strongly encouraged to engage in whatever erotic fantasies they can imagine, openly and without any sense of shame. Pleasure and perversion, then, turn

³ Robert Markley, "Gulliver and the Japanese: The Limit of the Postcolonial Past," *Modern Language Quarterly* 65:3 (September 2004), 458-459.

out to be in the very fabric of empire. The perverse desire of the pleasure-seeking white female leaders functions as a critique of empire in showing perversion to be at the very heart of empire building. Perversion is not something “outside,” but inherent to the authoritarian system itself. The sadistic cruelty is not merely sadism of S/M “play,” as some discussions of *Kachikujin Yapū* would suggest. It is the sadism of technological advancement and authority combined to promote absolute power.

Citizens of EHS do not talk about the justice and truth of their cause. EHS is not a humanist empire or a religious empire that justifies itself on moral grounds. It is opposed to the “calling from above” idea. EHS is an empire based solely upon the principle of the pursuit of pleasure through greater and better technologies and through the subjugation of non-white races. The notion that imperialism by the righteous and most technologically advanced nations will allow these more sacred and better nations to rightly conquer is undone in this tale of perverse sadism. Technology and imperialism enable absolute self-indulgence and the pursuit of pleasure; this is where Numa’s science fiction novel is at its most real. Nineteenth-century colonialist notions of procreation, civilization, and enlightenment as the goals of empire and the advancement of the “better” culture are replaced by perversion. Numa’s ethical act in this novel is to turn colonialist discourse into a sadistic rather than a missionary position.